

17 October

Memorandum of Meeting attended in Secretary Ball's Conference Room  
by Secretary McNamara, Bundy, General Taylor, Robert Kennedy,  
Martin and McCone *at 0830, 17 October*

1. Meeting involved an inclusive exploration of alternatives open to us in connection with the Cuban matter.

Ball seemed to feel military action would throw the NATO allies in disarray and permit Britain and France to separate from us on Berlin policy. Stated Kohler discussions with Khrushchev did not fit in with Soviet action in Cuba. Suggested Cuban situation might be by inadvertance. Suggested we might give Khrushchev an "out" on the grounds that he does not know what is going on in Cuba and discussed various types of action ranging from a limited military strike to minimize losses to ~~the~~ the calling of a Summit conference.

2. During the discussion Taylor and Ball speculated as to whether this whole thing was not a "mock up" designed to draw out action by us. and that the war heads were not there. This view was not supported.

3. McNamara urged avoiding taking a position, considering all alternatives, with meetings this afternoon and this evening in preparation of final discussion with the President tomorrow.

4. Urged exploration of all facts and listed the following:

About 50 or 60 MIG 17s and 19s now in Cuba and these apparently have no offensive capability.

One MIG 21 has been seen and a number of suspicious crates also seen indicating some MIG 21 capability and we do not know whether the MIG 21 has an offensive capability.

IL 28's have been delivered

Three MRBM sites under construction and can be ready in two weeks

Warhead locations unknown; also unknown whether MRBM's are nuclear or conventional. Also feels that if nuclear warheads supplied them Soviet will also supply nuclear bombs for bombers with offensive capability

STATE review(s) completed.

Shiploads of boxes of unknown purpose reported by Lundahl to DCI on October 14th.

28 Soviet ships en route to Cuba at the present time.

Sited at Havana, mysterious excavations, revetments, covered buildings, railroad tracks through tunnels, etc., might be nuclear storage site.

Other facts should be developed today.

Note: McCone responded by reading numbered paragraphs 2, 3, and 4 of attached memorandum dated October 17th.

5. General Taylor and Thompson discussed political nature of problem including possibility of forcing settlement in Berlin and elsewhere - Khrushchev wished show down on Berlin and this gives a show down issue. Believes Khrushchev would be surprised to find we know about MRBM's. Thompson emphasized Khrushchev wants Berlin settlement but on his terms. And will probably deny knowledge of Cuban situation but at any event would justify actions because of our missiles in Italy and Turkey. Also Khrushchev recognizes that action by us would be divisive among our allies.
6. McCone emphasized his views on political objectives as stated in paragraph 5 of the attached memorandum, and also repeated paragraph 2-C. Also made the point in paragraph 6.
7. McNamara discussed many operational questions concerning the use of Soviet nuclear warheads in Cuba; how communications could be arranged; what authority was in the field. Thompson believes Soviet nuclear warheads was under very tight control. McCone reviewed recent  reports, indicated considerable autonomy in hands of field commanders much more so than we have.
8. Bundy and McCone left for meeting with the President.

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